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The Brandywine

By John Russell Hayes

With Illustrations

By Robert Shaw



*“Sheltered pools
And fords where mild-eyed cattle seek the shade.”*

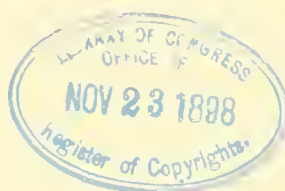
THE BRANDYWINE ❀
By John Russell Hayes
With Illustrations ❀ ❀
By Robert Shaw ❀ ❀

Wilmington, Delaware:
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TO C. H. ❀ ❀

The Brandywine

"I lie as lies yon placid Brandywine,
Holding the hills and heavens in my heart
For contemplation."

—SIDNEY LANIER

~~~~~

DEAR Stream of Beauty,—famed from olden time,  
Renowned in annals of our early days;  
Stream by whose banks the ancient Indians dwelt,  
And on thy waters plied their swift canoes,  
And in thy woodlands tracked the fleeting deer,—  
*Wawassan* called by those red foresters,  
Or *Suspeco*, as other legends say:  
Stream on whose shores our fathers fought and fell,  
Immortally remembered with the name  
Of Washington,—and Wayne, our county's pride,—  
And glorious Lafayette,—and many more,  
Whose memories romantic shall not die,  
Forever in our grateful hearts enshrined:

Dear Stream of Beauty,—loved of poets all;  
Dear to our Taylor in his ardent youth;  
The joyous theme of Read and Everhart;  
And sung by him from out the southern land,  
Lanier, the lover of all loveliness:



Dear Stream of Beauty, —flowing gently down  
Among the windings of my native hills,  
Gathering from all thy tributary brooks  
A richer force, and bearing from far heights  
Eternal tidings to the hoary sea:—  
Thee would I celebrate. O fill my page  
With thy soft music, and vouchsafe to grant,  
In measurement however small, the power  
To picture with a true and loving hand  
Thy visionary beauty calm and sweet!

A song of gratitude is mine, for since  
In boyhood's hour I rambled on thy banks  
And bathed or angled in thy peaceful pools,  
My love has been for thee; and later days  
Have but enhanced the joy thy presence gave.  
Youth's golden years and seasons of delight,  
Its happy fantasies and dreamings high,  
Were brighter yet for thy companionship;  
Thy rocks and shadowy groves, thy daisied fields,  
Deep pastoral solitudes and placid vales,  
And all the voices of thy hundred hills,  
Did speak in memorable accents, rich  
With messages from Nature's inner heart.

Among thy sunny meadows first I breathed  
The joyousness, the passion that delights  
In all the tranquil loveliness and charm  
Of field and dell, of tree and stream and sky,  
Blue misty hill and dreamy woodland soft,





*"The whispering reeds that line  
thy small lagoons"*





Life-giving sunshine and the fragrant rain,  
The dew-drops twinkling on the grass and leaves,  
The billowy clouds,—soft islands of the air,—  
Morn's tender radiance, and the hushed repose  
Of forest sanctuaries, and the songs  
Of warbling birds, wild Nature's choristers;  
May's vernal freshness exquisitely fair,  
The sunny summer-tide of poppiéd ease,  
The gorgeous autumn's melancholy grace,  
And all the beauty of the rural world.  
How many happy hearts have thus been led  
To close communion with earth's lovely forms,  
Belovéd Brandywine, and who would not  
Record with grateful voice the debt of joy,  
Of pure unfading joy and rapture high,  
Whose first awakening he owes to thee !

Born of the distant hills and northern woods,  
And wandering wide throughout a fertile land,  
Bringer art thou of richest fruitfulness,  
Abundant harvests and the laden bough.  
Full-handed plenty follows all thy course,  
And thou art blessed by thankful multitudes  
Who love thy placid beauty well, and hold  
In fond regard thy ever-winding stream,  
Each quiet little gulf and gleaming bay,  
From those high crystal springs that give thee birth  
To thy last reach in Delaware's far fields.



For whether hastening with murmurous song  
Down pebble-fretted slopes, or lingering  
In tranquil majesty along thy deeps,  
A kindly influence is ever thine.  
No fairer meadows or more fertile farms  
Are known than those thy quiet currents lave.  
Thy mellow acres yield their rich increase  
Of clover, corn, and gently waving wheat;  
Sleek-coated cattle graze upon thy meads,  
The sweetest flowers cluster by thy banks  
And waft their incense from a thousand vales.  
The old farmsteads upon thy grassy slopes  
Are homes of a contented people, proud  
To till the acres which their fathers held  
Ere that red day on Birmingham's high hills.  
Here old-time faith and manners are not dead;  
Calm days and nights fill out the tranquil year;  
Simplicity hath here her dwelling-place,  
And all is pastoral happiness and peace.

Far from hot pavements and the vexing cares  
Of crowded marts thy quiet waters flow,—  
By silent groves and soft idyllic glades,  
By upland slopes where wild strawberries grow,  
And meadows green with spicy peppermint;  
By banks where bloom the cowslips named for thee,  
And fields of crimson clover where the bees  
Are gleaning fragrant harvests all the day:  
Now loitering many a cool and shady mile





*"Some loud-droning mill  
among the trees"*



By woodland aisles and sylvan corridors,  
Where moss and tangled fern clothe all thy banks  
With softest green, and little fairy groves  
Of dainty maidenhair sway in the breeze;  
Now drifting quietly in sheltered pools  
And fords where mild-eyed cattle seek the shade;  
Now issuing forth into the gleaming day  
And rollicking with silver laughter down  
In foaming waterfalls, across whose breast  
The tiny rainbow bends its jewelled bars.  
Then winding forth again thou dost caress  
The whispering reeds that line thy small lagoons,  
And water-grasses whose long amber arms  
Wave ceaselessly along thy currents clear.

And oft thy forceful waters are restrained  
And sent along the full, rush-margined race,  
To turn the mossy, ever-dripping wheel  
Of some loud-droning mill among the trees.  
What pleasure, pausing here, to peer within  
The olden chambers dim with dusty meal,—  
To see the portly sacks of new-threshed wheat,  
And yellow corn that almost bursts the bins,  
And hear the mill-wheels grumbling o'er their task  
Of grinding grain for all the countryside!

Beneath the arch of many an ancient bridge  
Thy waters move with eddying swirl, untouched  
By languors of the dusty road above.  
In stately march thou sweetest past the fields







*"Beneath the arch of many  
an ancient bridge"*



Where ruddy farmers ply their harvest toil,  
Mixing the music of the whetted scythe  
With thy soft murmurs, piling up the rows  
Of dry, sweet-smelling hay, which thence is drawn  
In creaking wagons to the generous mows  
Of old stone barns,—upon whose mossy roofs  
The crimson-footed pigeons sit and croon  
In sober companies; now wheeling down  
In white-winged circles to the yard below,  
To pick the scattered grains of wheat and oats;  
Now settling on the eaves with stately pride  
To show the beauty of their burnished necks.  
High overhead the snowy cloud-land floats,  
And in the mirror of thy lucent depths  
Repeats the beauty of its mystic forms,  
Its pearly mountains and its creamy capes,  
And islands drifting through the azure seas.

How sweet I found it oft on summer days  
To launch my boat, and on thy placid tide  
To drift as do the clouds, without a care,  
And full of peace as they. O hours of dreams,  
Of dreams and soft imaginings and fond  
Reflections,—fantasies without a name!  
Or waking from my revery, 'twas joy  
To send the boat along with eager stroke,  
Rousing thy surface into sparkling rings  
That eddied toward the shore with rhythmic dance.  
Anon I loved to pause with dripping oar,





*"To drift as do the clouds, without a care,  
And full of peace as they"*



And peering into thy transparent deeps,  
To mark the timid fish that hovered there,—  
The silver-sided chub, the dusky bass,  
And little sunfish with their golden scales,  
Now winnowing the water with clear gills,  
Now darting with a flash of purple fin  
Far into watery shades and silent homes  
Of willow roots beneath the sedgy bank,  
Or shadowy chambers in the sunless rocks.

In drowsy afternoons oft have I heard  
The tiny insect voices by thy shores,—  
The lazy chorus of the katydids,  
The faint, small murmur of the busy gnats  
That dance in fretful clouds above the sands  
That border on thy shallows, and the keen,  
Sweet chirrings of the sleepy locust-kind,  
Those happy idlers of midsummer days.  
There would I muse till misty evening brought  
The clear nocturnal croakings of the frogs  
Sheltered beneath thy overhanging banks,  
Or perched upon green lily-pads afloat  
In star-lit waters of thy waveless coves.

The tranquil evening hour beside thy stream,—  
What peace and pensive solitude then reign!  
The herds have left the fields, the harvest-teams  
Long since have gone with their last fragrant loads;  
Soft vapors o'er the meadows sleep, and all  
Is rest and quietude, save where the dove,





In some cool covert hid from human eye,  
Grieveth and grieveth all the darkling eve.  
Ah, gentle mourner, what soft pain is thine,  
What tender melancholy stirs thy breast?  
Perchance some old romantic sorrow lies  
About thy heart, or memory of wrong  
Done to thy kind long since in some green vale  
Of dim Thessalian woods. Thy pensive note  
No elegy can match, and thy sweet woe  
Makes memorable the sacred twilight hour.

An ever-varying poetry is thine,  
O gentle Brandywine; songs light or grave,  
As fancy's changeful ear interprets them,  
Thy crystal-chiming waters sing to me.  
Yet not thy voices only do I hear,  
Soft and mellifluous ever though they be;  
For blending with their harmony the sound  
Of Old World rivers comes across the years,  
And pleasant revery bears me to the banks  
Of Derwent sweet, whose music filled the heart  
Of Wordsworth while as yet a little child;  
Or silver Duddon, offspring of the clouds;  
Or honest Walton's peaceful river Lea;  
Or that slow-winding stream, the languid Ouse,  
Well-loved of him who sang of country joys  
In calm reflective verse; or yet again  
To old Dean-Bourne, where by the plashy brink  
Grew Herrick's daffodils whose loveliness





*"Thy peaceful charm and sweet tranquillity"*



He made immortal. Yea, and farther yet  
My musings carry me, and echoes faint  
Of reedy-marged Ilissus do I hear  
Murmuring of nymphs and river-deities,  
And all the glory of the violet hills  
That lie around Athena's marble town.

Athena! ah, the name is here unknown;  
Unheard Cephissus and Ilissus here;  
Thy woodlands are unhaunted by the nymphs,  
No hamadryads whisper 'mid the leaves  
Of thy tall trees; nor does the sportive crew  
Of satyrs range with Pan thy vernal fields.  
No far-descended echoes wake thy hills  
Of that poetic life whose perfect joy  
Made fair unto all time Aegean isle,  
Idalian fount, and Heliconian vale,  
And liveth now but in the faded grace  
Of carven Attic frieze or Grecian urn.

Nor does the nightingale, lorn Philomel,  
Among the shadows of thy moonlit glades,  
Pour out her old ancestral threnody  
For Itylus through all the summer night.  
Nay,—yet thy thickets have their own sweet bird,  
The poet-bird that keeps his lonely state  
In sylvan cloisters far from eye of man,—  
The dear wood-robin! Underneath green roofs  
Of forest solitudes what joy to hear



The liquid fluting of this minstrel rare  
Thrilling the beechen shades with rapturous song!  
Now fading,— now returning,—comes his voice,  
In purling cadence clear as is the plash  
Of sweet-toned rills o'er pebbles smooth and cool.

Streams of romance and beauty have I known,—  
The lordly Shannon rolling down his tides  
Far in the west of green Hibernia's isle;  
The tranquil Thames that dreams beside the grey  
And storied walls of Oxford's ancient town,  
And passes on through England's loveliest meads  
By many a hamlet quaint and flowery garth;  
The "wandering Po" that waters Lombardy;  
And Rhone's imperial river, icy-pure,  
Bearing a largess from high Alpine fields  
To pour into the lap of the Mid-Sea.

Yet still with happy heart to thee I turn,  
Belovéd Stream, that nourished first my joy  
In rural beauty and idyllic scenes,  
And solitude, that teacher calm and wise.  
Well may fair Chester County's children bless  
Thy tranquil flood that from far northern hills  
Brings fruitfulness to these wide meads and vales,  
And fills the fields with verdure rich and deep.  
The soul and centre thou of every tract  
And fertile township where thy currents flow;  
Each bubbling waterfall, each amber pool,  
Each tributary runnel dimpling down







*"And those wide hills of storied Birmingham"*



From folded hills, confirms thy gentle power,  
Thy peaceful charm and sweet tranquillity.

Unfading is the loveliness that clings  
Round each familiar scene along thy course:—  
The upland fields of fertile Honeybrook;  
The willowed banks of pastoral Fallowfield;  
The silent wooded vales of dear Newlin,  
Home of arbutus and primeval pine,  
And its old hillsides where my fathers wrought  
For generations long ago; thy shores  
In green Pocopson, haunt of fishermen;  
And pleasant Bradford rich with waving corn;  
And those wide hills of storied Birmingham,  
Where Lafayette, exemplar bright and pure  
Of old noblesse and ancient chivalry,  
Spared not to shed his blood in our high cause,  
And linked his name and Liberty's for aye!—  
Such beauties and such memories still cling  
Around thy valleys and thy verdant glades,  
Rich pasture-lands and silent, virgin woods,  
Historic hills and loved ancestral farms,—  
From those high crystal springs that give thee birth  
To thy last reach in Delaware's far fields.

Forever fair, O Brandywine, art thou,  
Forever fair in thine unceasing flow!—  
A type and symbol unto restless man  
Of calm contentment, and devotion high  
To duty's bidding,—with unceasing flow





*"Rich pasture-lands and silent, virgin woods"*



Fulfilling through the years thy destiny.  
The sun in stately majesty doth rise,  
Across wide heaven journeys all the day,  
Fades in the purple west and disappears;  
The sickle moon swims high above the woods  
And sheds her radiance o'er the dreaming hills,  
While that lone eremite the evening star  
Comes loitering across the azure fields.  
Each hath his season, each his time of rest:  
But thou unresting art; majestic sun  
And sickle moon and lonely evening star,  
In turn are mirrored in thy lucent breast,  
While day and night thou movest on thy way,  
Forever fair in thine unceasing flow!

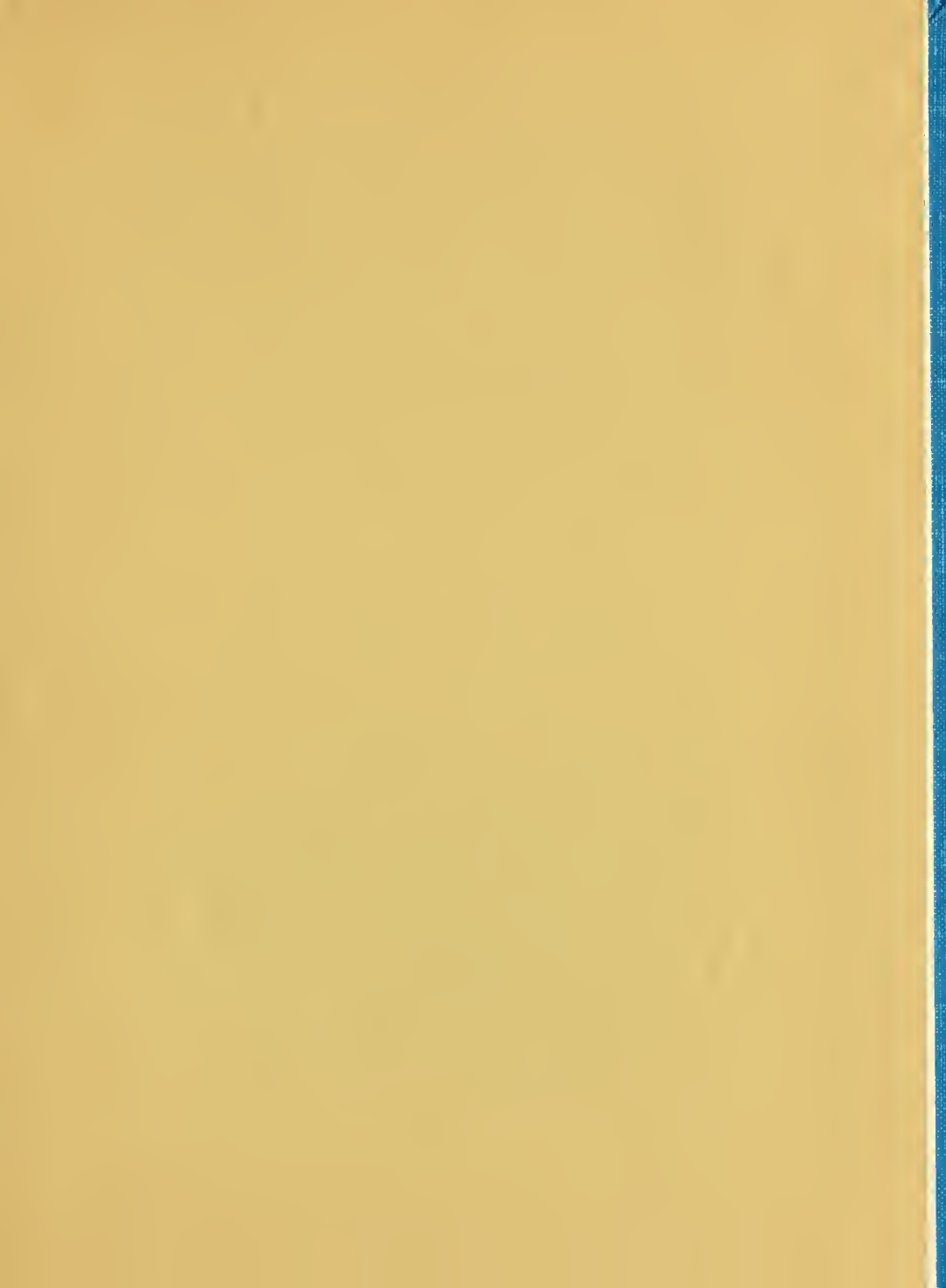
Then blessings on thy heaven-given power  
To cheer the heart of man with lofty joy,  
With joy and sweet content and deepest peace,—  
Dear Stream of Beauty,—flowing gently down  
Among the windings of my native hills,  
Gathering from all thy tributary brooks  
A richer force, and bearing from far heights  
Eternal tidings to the hoary sea!

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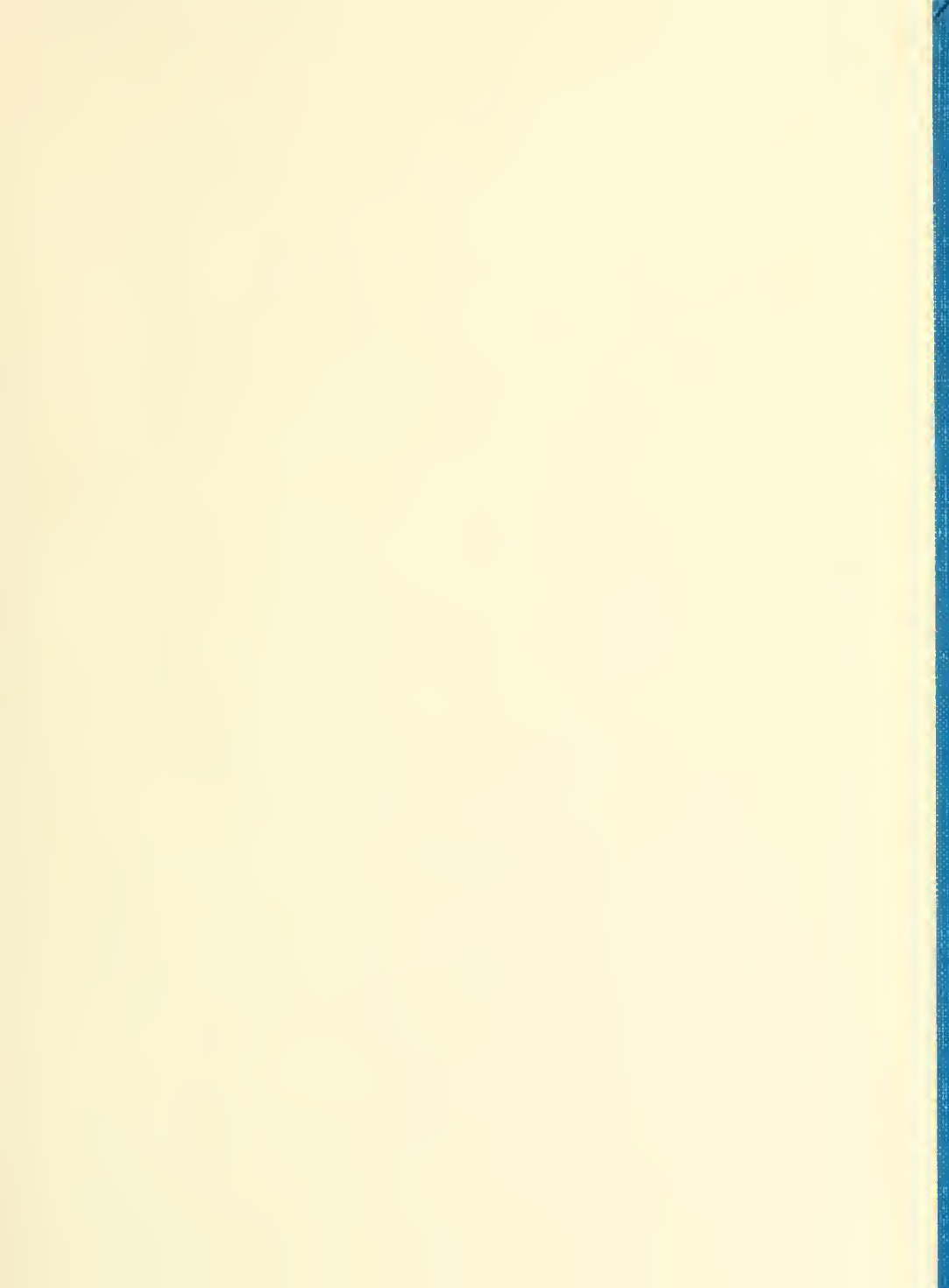












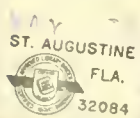








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